

IN THE LONG AGO,
—OR—
THE DAYS OF THE CATTLE BELL



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THOMAS LAIDLAW.

'Tis vain regret, yet we often dream
Of the leafy woods and the shady stream,
Of fires that burned with a ruddy glow,
And of friends that were loved in the long ago.

Thos. Laidlaw.

2000

IN THE LONG AGO,

—or—

THE DAYS OF THE CATTLE BELL.

*When worth, not wealth, gave man a place,
And a patch on a garment was no disgrace.*

The weary world has laid aside
Its cares awhile at the eventide
Of another day, and here in the gloom,
By our unlit lamp in a quiet room,
Our thoughts flit back to the early days—
With their homely joys and their simple ways—
These early days have a tender spot
In a heart that is full of forget-me-not.

Old memories wake, till the past appears
Renewed, as beheld in the far off years,
We are breathing the freshness of native woods,
And we witness anew their changeful moods,
In their drowsy whisperings, soft and low,
Or in battle hymn when the rude winds blow,
And we feel the repose which the heart receives
As we step to the rustle of Autumn leaves.

And along the wayside we see here and there
The little log houses so rustic and bare,
Ringed in with the woods, while their lockless doors
A true welcome give to their uneven floors,
And wide-open hearths, where, kindly and bright,
The back-logs glow on a keen frosty night,
With the smoke curling up, in the old-fashioned way,
From the wide-throated chimneys of "cat and clay."

And here, in the dusk, as we listening wait,
The oxen turn in at the five-barred gate ;
They have been miles away with a grist to the mill,
And, as likely as not, bring a keg from the still.
Drawing near in the gloom we at once recognize
The wisdom that lurks in their great dreamy eyes,
And the patience evinced in their toiling evokes
An honest respect for the true, faithful ox.

And now, in the twilight, so peaceful and still,
A concert is led by the lone whippoorwill
On the edge of the wood, and how sweetly he sings,
Till the stump-studded clearing with melody rings ;
All nature is breathless, and reaching to hear
The sweet liquid echoes that melt on the ear,
Till the owl from the swamp, all restraint breaking through,
Sends out an applause in his weirdly too-whooh.

Old memories these, yet of these we would tell,
As we think of the days of the old cattle bell
In the green leafy wood, and of hearts that were kind,
Ere distinctions were drawn and the classes defined ;
When equality ruled, and all were infused
With a spirit aye ready to use or be used.
If aid were required, though the deed might be small,
Yet to help and be helped was accepted by all.

Yes, the old pioneers were of heart stout and true,
With a purpose in life ever steadfast in view,
As the ring of the axe and the forest that fell,
With the rough logging field, of that purpose would tell—
So they toiled till the land of the forest was cleared,
And the homes by the wayside with fullness were cheered ;
And then, only then, did they seek to unbend,
And the evening of life with a blessing to spend.

So, in this quiet hour, early scenes re-appear,
And voices long stilled gently break on the ear
By the great wooden fires, with their warm ruddy glow,
On keen frosty nights in the years long ago ;
When friends gathered in whom we fondly recall
In visage, in humor, in laughter and all.
O, the pathos conjured ! what language can tell ?
As we think of the days of the old cattle bell.

Now, like old native trees of the forest that's left
In the fields all alone, of their fellows bereft,
So the old pioneers look deserted and lone—
Their usefulness past, early friends dead and gone ;
A few only spared, time-wrinkled, while they
Are awaiting the hour that will bear them away
From fields wherein youth they heroically led,
To a quiet repose in the lone narrow bed.

Then at rest, all at rest, in the grave, all alone,
With little to show but a plain, simple stone,
With a few meagre dates, to be read by the few
Who tenderly still keep their memory in view ;
Yet to yield in their turn, leaving no one to tell
Of life in the days of the old cattle bell.
And time, ever fleeting, is hastening the day
When he who is musing will be even as they.

TENDER MEMORIES—THE FAIR.

Yes, the weary longing's past,
The day has come at last,
Of days the rarest of the rare,
And we're off through the woods,
In the happiest of moods,
With a "yorker" to spend at the fair—
At the fair,
On the apples and the buns at the fair,
Ripe and rare.

And the little story books,
Which held us as with hooks
Till bought, yet with prudence and with care,
Our resources being small,
Which, with buns and books and all,
We had nothing really needlessly to spare—
Nothing really foolishly to spare.

Ah! these little books were rare—
Choice and rare,
A perfect joy to us, we declare!
And we placed them by themselves
On our little rustic shelves,
By the old "Concession," where
We studied them with care—
Yes, with care,
Till their every word we knew,
Yet old they never grew,
And they always seemed so true,
These wondrous story books from the fair.

A ne'er forgotten day was the fair.
Other days we might recall,
Such as New Year's, with the ball,
But the grandest of them all
 Was the fair,
 Yes, the fair.
The grandest of them all
 Was the fair.

**On Reading an early Inscription in an Old
Burying Ground.**

In a wee log house by the river side,
In the settler's modest clearing,
A little boy lies on his dying bed
And the end is rapidly nearing.

He dies, and his humble coffin is borne
Through the snow covered woods in sorrow
To the lonely hill to lie at rest—
To rest till the quick'ning morrow.

He lies at rest and he lies alone—
Alone in the woods so dreary
Where the stars glisten through on his little grave
And the night winds are wild and eerie.

